

Call Before You Cut

As forestry division chief, I spend a lot of time thinking about healthy and sustainable forests for Missouri. And when I look out my window or drive down the road, I see trees, lots of them!

So what's the problem with Missouri's forests? If trees are abundant in our state, why should I be worried?

The truth is I, like most Missourians, take trees and forests for granted because of their seeming abundance. I also take for granted things such as clean water, fresh air, diverse wildlife habitat, wood products and scenic beauty that our forests produce. With our forests providing so many benefits for what seems like "free," again, what's the problem with the forests in Missouri? The biggest problem with them is that while they seem abundant, most are not well-managed or managed at all, and this is simply not sustainable in the long run. Most of our woodland has been mismanaged by a harvesting practice called "high-grading" (cutting the best and leaving the rest).

The good news is that professional foresters are available to help you harvest your woods while improving the health and quality of the remaining trees.

A professional forester can tell you many things about your trees. They can tell you what type of trees you have, how many trees there are per acre, whether they are too crowded, too thin or just right, if your trees are young or old (you can't always tell from their size), if they are sick or healthy, if they are growing

fast or slow, if they are valuable or not, and what type of wildlife they support. The forester can then advise you of the proper way to harvest trees to improve the quality and health of your woodland while meeting your management objectives and enhancing your timber sale revenue.

In addition, a professional forester can help you find the best logger for the job; develop a harvest contract to protect you and your woodland, soil and water resources; and even show you how to save money on taxes.

To contact a professional forester, contact the Missouri Consulting Foresters Association at www.missouriforesters.com, or contact your regional Department of Conservation office to receive a list of Missouri Consultant Foresters (see Page 3 for phone numbers). So, the next time you think about harvesting a few trees from your woods for income or habitat improvement,

or a local logger knocks on your door and offers you money for your trees, remember to call a professional forester before you cut. You can contribute to improving Missouri's forest for future generations!

Lisa G. Allen, forestry division chief



OUR MISSION: *To protect and manage the fish, forest and wildlife resources of the state; to serve the public and facilitate their participation in resource management activities; and to provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about fish, forest and wildlife resources.*
